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MAPLE SUGAR TIME IN THE NATIONAL FORESTS

A discussion by Wallace Kadderly, Chief of the Radio Service, and Elizabeth Pitt, Forest Service, broadcast Friday, March 31, 1939, in the Department of Agriculture portion of the National Farm and Home Program by 104 stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company.

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KADDERLY:

Elizabeth Pitt of the Forest Service is here with another National Forest Story . . . a story that not even Ranger Jim Robbins and the rest of the folks on the Pine Cone National Forest would know about . . . from the production angle, at least . . . but from the consumption angle . . . well, that would be another story.

PITT:

You're making it sound very mysterious, Wallace.

KADDERLY:

Well . . . there's no better setting for a good mystery story than a deep, dark forest . . .

PITT:

But the production of maple sugar is really not a mystery at all . . . however, as far as the Forest Service is concerned, a maple sugar story is a little unusual because the tapping of maple trees on a commercial scale takes place on only two out of our 160 National Forests.

KADDERLY:

And those two are in New England . . .

PITT:

That's right . . . the sugar maple only grows east of the Rockies . . . and there are two National Forests where the climate is favorable for the production of good sap . . . one is the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire . . . and the other is the Green Mountain National Forest in Vermont. Most of the maple sugar activity really goes on in the Green Mountain Forest.

KADDERLY:

Betsy, I'm one of those people who is wondering what effect the New England hurricane of last September had on the production of maple sugar and sirup. After all, New England produces about half of our entire maple crop.

PITT:

I think you can rest fairly easy, Wallace . . . it is hard to estimate the extent of the damage and the effect it will have on the future production of maple sirup and sugar, but the Vermont Department of Agriculture has made a survey and believes that if the present season is normal, the 1939 maple sugar crop for Vermont will only be about 20 percent lower than usual.

(over)

KADDERLY:

Only twenty percent less than usual . . . that brightens the pancake situation considerably, doesn't it?

PITT:

Yes . . . and the Vermont authorities say that it's anyone's guess as to how much of that loss may be recovered . . . young, untapped trees may be brought into production . . . blocks of old trees that haven't been tapped for a long time may be tapped again . . . and there may be a general expansion into the hills to locate trees that have never been used before.

KADDERLY:

You've been speaking of the State of Vermont generally . . . how did the hurricane affect the Green Mountain National Forest . . . did you lose many sugar trees there?

PITT:

No . . . the Green Mountain National Forest was not in the path of the hurricane . . . and it suffered a comparatively small loss of trees.

KADDERLY:

Will that fact help any in restoring the maple-sirup-and-sugar industry in the vicinity of the National Forest?

PITT:

It is possible that it will. Of course, the sugar trees in the Forest are more difficult to tap than in farm orchards because they're harder to reach. But if people living in the vicinity of the Green Mountain National Forest want permission to tap sugar trees, this will be granted to as large an extent as will be consistent with good woods practices. This is in line with the general Forest Service policy of treating each National Forest as a service unit . . . that is, making each National Forest serve the people in every way possible.

KADDERLY:

Now, I want to ask you something else. Is maple sugar an American institution?

PITT:

Yes . . . it's simon-pure American . . . the United States and Canada are the only countries in the world that produce maple sugar and maple sirup. The early explorers found the Indians making them . . . especially in places along the Saint Lawrence River. The explorers soon improved on the crude methods the Indians used, and the industry has been active ever since . . . but confined for the most part to Vermont, New York and Ohio . . . where the weather conditions are best for producing good sap. Pennsylvania, Michigan, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and Maryland also produce some maple sugar products.

KADDERLY:

But Vermont is really the leader, isn't it?

PITT:

Yes, by far . . . to be very statistical about it. . . there are about twelve and a half million sugar trees tapped in the United States every year, and five and a half million of them are in Vermont.

KADDERLY:

Well, all around, Betsy, that's an encouraging report on the effects of the New England blowdown on the maple sugar industry. . .